



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

Acquisition Policy 99-1

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

7 JUN 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

FROM: SAF/AQ
1060 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1060

SUBJECT: Using Specifications and Standards

This memorandum supersedes Acquisition Policy 95A-003, *Specs and Standards - A New Way of Doing Business*, and 98A-001, *Requiring Processes on Contract*, and updates Air Force specifications and standards policy. The revised policy (Attachment 1) provides a balanced approach that acknowledges the potential need for standards, clarifies when they are used, and identifies waiver requirements for the use of standards in ACAT I, II, and III programs. These policy guidelines are applicable to all Air Force acquisitions.

Reform of military specifications and standards was a key aspect of DoD acquisition reform. As a result of actions taken to date, all DoD standardization documents have been reviewed for cancellation, revision, or retention. Those that were not appropriate were cancelled and others were rewritten in performance language. The retained documents define unique military interfaces/requirements or represent best practices, and to the greatest extent possible are written in performance terms. These remaining standards support the intent of acquisition reform and may be used when appropriate in a performance based acquisition.

Although we have changed the way we apply standards, there is no set limit on the number of standards that can be cited in a solicitation. Every program should look at their requirements (including the need for standards) and apply those standards necessary to support requirements and manage risk. The attached policy addresses and outlines the appropriate use and application of standards in solicitations and contracts.

I expect Program Executive Officers and Designated Acquisition Commanders to ensure appropriate use of standards in their programs. The Air Force Standardization Executive (SE) is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition (Science, Technology, and Engineering), SAF/AQR. The point of contact for information on implementing this policy is the Air Force Departmental Standardization Office (DepSO), SAF/AQRE at (703) 588-7845 or DSN 425-7845.

Attachments:

1. Policy on Standards Use
2. Distribution List

LAWRENCE J. DELANEY
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Acquisition)

SAF/AQ POLICY

USING SPECIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

05/19/99

1. Purpose. This SAF/AQ policy provides guidance on the use of specifications, standards and related documents for the acquisition of goods and services per Public Law, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), DoDD 5000.1, "Defense Acquisition," DoD 5000.2-R, "Mandatory Procedures for Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs) and Major Automated Information System (MAIS) Acquisition Programs," and DoD 4120.3-M, "Defense Standardization Program (DSP) Policies and Procedures," on the use of specifications and standards in solicitations and contracts.

2. Scope. This policy applies to use of standardization documents in all Air Force acquisitions. Standardization documents include defense specifications and standards developed by DoD, International Standardization Agreements (ISA), Federal specifications and standards, Commercial Item Descriptions (CIDs), Non-Government Standards (NGSs) developed by private sector standards organizations, and contractor generated internal standards. The DoD Index of Specifications and Standards (DoDISS) lists approved military and federal standardization documents and adopted NGSs. Current Standardization policy and program information is available on the SAF/AQ web pages at <http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/aqre/>.

3. Using Specifications and Standards. DoD policy states a preference for use of performance specifications and standards when purchasing new systems, major modifications, and commercial and non-developmental items, and restricts the use of standard management approaches or manufacturing processes in solicitations and contracts. In addition, the Air Force supports use of a performance-based business approach toward acquisition. Under this overall framework, there are situations where the use of standardization documents is either required or desirable, although in some cases a waiver may be required. The decision to use standardization documents in an acquisition, including reprocurements, should be both requirements-based and business-based. The general approach for determining whether to use such documents, as well as other related considerations, are further described below.

a. General Document Use Decision. Actual selection of standardization documents for an acquisition is based on the user's need; operational and support concepts; interoperability requirements; international agreements; practicality and cost of using performance specifications; risk management; business strategy; and the availability of appropriate commercial and non-developmental items. Program managers should use the decision process in Figure 1 as a guide in determining use of specifications and standards. The result is that contracts and solicitations may contain a mix of both performance and detail standardization documents necessary to support the specific acquisition.

b. User-Specified Requirements. Operational Requirements Documents (ORD) for a system may contain interoperability, interface, or other standardization requirements; however, specification of detailed design solutions should be limited to specific essential operational requirements. Standardization documents implementing specific operational requirements are part of the systems performance requirements and may be included in solicitations and contracts. These documents may be materiel, interface, or interoperability requirements. ORDs, however, should not contain standards that direct specific management or manufacturing processes.

c. Joint Technical Architecture (JTA) Requirements. DoD has developed the Joint Technical Architecture (JTA) for information technology applications. Air Force program and buying offices shall use the DoD JTA standards applicable to their acquisition for all new and upgraded systems per DoD 5000.2-R. No waiver is required to use any of the applicable JTA standards in solicitations or contracts. Waivers for not using a required JTA standard are addressed in paragraph 5.d. Additional information on the JTA is available on the web at <http://www-jta.itsi.disa.mil/>.

d. Requirement for Use of Open System Specifications and Standards. The Open Systems approach makes use of open interface specifications and standards to define the physical, functional, and/or operational relationship between systems, subsystems, equipment, assemblies, components, items or parts. For all MDAP and MAIS programs the program manager is required to devise an open systems strategy. In order to take advantage of the benefits gained by using an Open Systems approach, all other programs should consider its use when developing their acquisition strategies. The Government does not specify standards in an Open Systems approach, but establishes a requirement for the contractor to use, as much as possible, open system standards when defining a systems architecture. The Open Systems approach does, however, have to take in consideration system requirements and constraints (e.g. ORD, JTA, etc.).

e. Document Use in Reprocurements. Reprocurements may use an existing technical data package when an exact design solution is needed, or a modified build-to-print package when slight changes/improvements are needed. Consequently, any decision to either stay with a build-to-print or modified build-to-print package, or to rewrite the requirements in form-fit-function-interface terms should consider the overall business case for the materiel in question; this includes whether or not it is practical or cost effective to update the technical data in performance-based terms.

Using Specifications and Standards

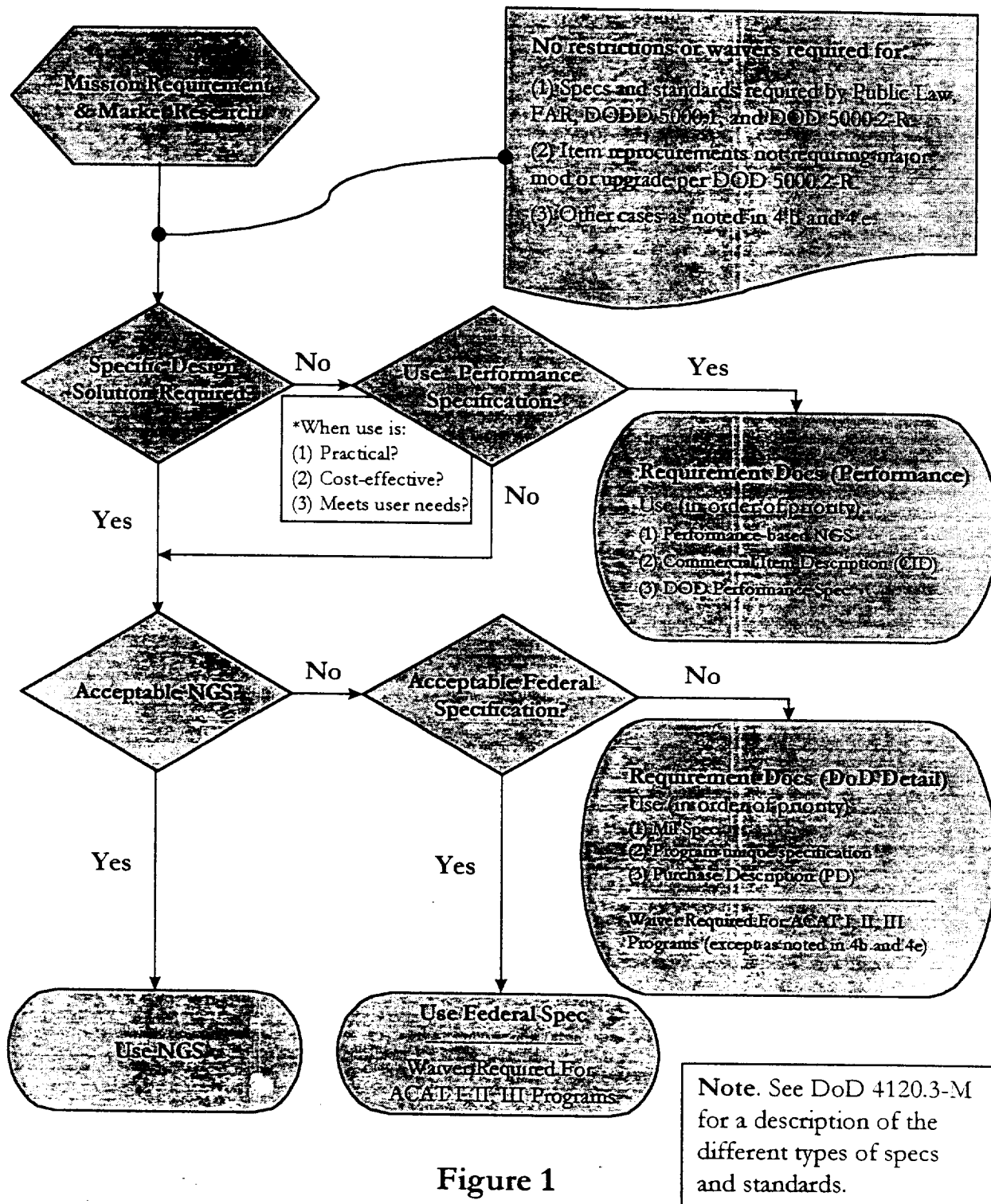


Figure 1

4. Document Selection and Waiver Requirements. While many military specifications and standards have been canceled, selected documents have been retained for unique military interfaces and requirements and may be used as needed in solicitations and contracts. In general, waivers are not required for use of performance requirements documents and certain other types of standardization documents (see paragraph 4.b. below). Use of certain documents, however, may require a waiver (see paragraphs 4.c. and 4.d). Finally, under certain circumstances documents are exempted from the waiver process altogether (see paragraph 4.e).

a. Selection of DSP documents. The process for selection of specifications, standards and related documents to use in acquisitions is outlined in Figure 1, "Using Specifications and Standards." This process identifies waiver requirements, complies with DoDD 5000.1 and DoD 5000.2-R requirements, and incorporates the FAR and DSP hierarchy for selection of standardization documents. FAR, Part 11, "Describing Agency Needs," and DoD 4120.3-M provide the general order of precedence shown below for the selection and use of standardization documents in acquisitions.

- 1) Documents mandated for use by law (e.g., Federal statutory and regulatory requirements)
- 2) Performance-based non-governmental standards (NGS)
- 3) Commercial Item Descriptions (CID)
- 4) Military performance specifications (MIL-PRF)
- 5) Detail NGS
- 6) Federal Specification, Standards (FED-SPEC, FED-STD)
- 7) Military Detail Specifications (MIL-DTL)

b. Documents Not Requiring a Waiver. There are standardization documents that do not require waivers. These include a number of standardization documents that support performance based acquisitions. Performance requirements documents include DoD performance specifications, commercial item descriptions, and performance-based non-government standards. Other standardization document types that may be used without a waiver include interface standards, DoD Standard Practices, etc. The following types of documents can be used without restrictions:

- 1) Documents required by law or regulation.
- 2) Documents required to implement international agreements
- 3) Documents required by the Operational Requirements Document (ORD)
- 4) Standard Practices *
- 5) Interface standards *
- 6) Non-Government Standards (NGS) - (except as noted in 4.d.)
- 7) Commercial item descriptions *
- 8) Government specifications designated in the DoDISS as performance specifications *
- 9) Federal Information Processing Standards *
- 10) Handbooks (cited as reference only) *

* Listed and available through the DoDISS

c. Documents Requiring Waivers in Solicitations. The following standardization documents require a waiver when citing as a requirement in solicitations for Air Force ACAT I, II, and III programs. They may be used without a waiver if the offeror proposes their use in response to a solicitation (except as noted in 4.d) and on item reprocurments (see paragraph 3.e.) not requiring major modification or upgrade per DoD 5000.2-R and all other Air Force acquisitions.

- 1) Non-performance military specifications and standards.
- 2) Program unique detail specifications and standards that define exact design solutions.
- 3) Federal specifications and standards.
- 4) Any cancelled or inactivated specifications and standards.
- 5) Specifications and standards that describe a management or manufacturing processes (see 4.d. for additional details)

d. Documents Requiring Waivers in Solicitations and Contracts. Management and manufacturing process standards, when used for a MDAP, require waivers whether its part of the solicitation or contract. Citing these types of standards restricts the contractor's flexibility to improve their internal processes. Therefore, use of these standards is a risk management decision, and if practical, should be avoided.

e. Waiver Exemptions. Certain types of documents and acquisitions are exempt or may obtain an exemption (see paragraph 5.c.) from the waiver requirement. The following is a list of specific cases when a waiver is not required for:

- 1) Specifications or standards identified in a solicitation response (except as noted in 4.d.)
- 2) Reprocurment of an item not requiring major modification or upgrade, as defined in DoD 5000.2-R.
- 3) Specifications and standards under the Standardization Area for Technical Manual Specifications and Standards (TMSS).
- 4) Specifications and standards under Federal Supply Group 11 for Nuclear Ordnance and Federal Supply Class 4470 for Nuclear Reactors.
- 5) Non-DoD customers requiring the use of a specification or standard. If a Foreign Military Sales customer or other non-DoD customer, such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, specifically requests the use of military specifications and standards in any solicitation, no waiver is required and the specifications and standards may be cited in the request for proposal.
- 6) Combined or joint acquisition programs where another federal agency or country has the lead in design or acquisition of an item.
- 7) Specifications or standards cited for guidance only. However, the solicitation must clearly state what performance criteria will be used in evaluating proposals and that the cited specification(s) or standard(s) represents only one possible acceptable solution. The waiver decision authority should challenge excessive listing of specifications and standards used for guidance only, since it may send the wrong message to potential contractors and does not promote acquisition cultural change.

- 8) Specifications and standards (except as noted in 4.d.) which were waived for use during a previous phase of a specific ACAT development/modification program and subsequently included as part of the contract baseline for that phase.

5. Waivers. A waiver is required for use of the types of documents listed in paragraph 4.c. on Air Force ACAT I, II, and III acquisitions (except as noted in paragraph 4.e.); however, no waiver is required for their use on other Air Force acquisitions. Per DoD 5000.1, military detail specifications and standards may be used when they are “needed to define an exact design solution because there is no acceptable non-government standard or because the use of a performance specification or non-government standard is not cost-effective, not practical, or does not meet the user’s needs.” ACAT programs should only use detail military specifications and standards as a last resort. (Note. The process for use and selection of standardization documents identified in Figure 1 is valid for all acquisitions.)

a. Waiver Process. When a waiver is required the System Program Director (SPD) is the waiver approval authority. In cases where there is no SPD the Single Manager is the approval authority. The Program Manager is responsible to ensure decisions made in accordance with this policy are documented. Waiver requests and approvals can be consolidated with documentation used to support the milestone review process, such as including the request and justification as part of the Acquisition Strategy Report (ASR), Streamlining section. Decisions shall be included in the contract file or traceable to formal milestone decision documentation. Waivers shall only be approved when (1) an exact design solution is required and an acceptable non-government standard does not exist, or (2) the use of a performance specification or non-government standard would not meet user needs, be cost effective, or practical.

b. Waivers for Processes on Contract. In order to cite a specific management approach or manufacturing process in a solicitation or contract, a MDAP program must obtain a waiver. This policy does not restrict processes directed by DoDD 5000.1, DoD 5000.2-R, FAR, public law, or the use of these standards by non-MDAP programs. The program manager must identify for approval each of the management approach(s) or manufacturing process(es) to be contractually cited and provide rationale for their use. The waiver approval process is the same as the process outlined in paragraph 5.a. above. Regardless of the approach used, waivers must be obtained before the RFP or solicitation is released, or prior to contract award for those processes not previously approved.

c. Service -Wide Exemptions From Waiver Process. The Air Force Standardization Executive (SE) may exempt any specification or standardization from the waiver process for their use in solicitations. Requests must justify why the document should be exempt and specify the application of the exemption, such as, exempt Air Force-wide, exempt for space-borne hardware, etc. Requests for exemption should be submitted to the Department Standardization Office, SAF/AQRE, DSN 425-7845.

d. JTA Waiver Process. Waiver requirements for not using an applicable JTA standard are provided in the JTA implementation plan (dated 1 Dec 98). The plan states that waivers to JTA standards may be granted by the Component Acquisition Executive with the concurrence of the USD(A&T) and the ASD(C3I).

6. Obtaining Standardization Documents. The DoD Index of Specifications and Standards (DoDISS) lists approved military and federal standardization documents and adopted NGSs. Documents listed in the DoDISS, including listed NGS documents, can be ordered free of charge by Air Force offices from the DoD Single Stock Point for Military Standards and Specifications (Defense Automated Printing Service (DAPS)). Other NGS documents not listed in the DoDISS can be ordered directly from a NGS organization with an IMPAC card or other procurement method. For additional information and on-line ordering go to <http://assist.daps.mil/online/>.

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